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# THE RELATIONS OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA WITH THE UNITED STATES AS AFFECTED BY THE EUROPEAN WAR

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The relations of Central and South America with the United States may be reduced, for the purpose of our discussion, into: political relations, commercial relations and intellectual relations.

## *Political Relations*

The political relations of the United States with the countries of Central and South America have undoubtedly been modified by reason of the European war. This appears from the expression of opinions formed by the people of Latin America, with relation to the civilized countries of Europe, now at war, which only yesterday were criticising the political turmoils of some of the countries of this hemisphere and clamoring in the name of civilization and humanity for the intervention of some of the stronger republics in the affairs of their weaker sisters. It suffices to say that the spirit of solidarity and good will among the Latin American nations is markedly stronger and a growing intimacy between these countries and the United States is now apparent.

Meanwhile, everything seems to tend to the formation of a more complete union for the defense of the common interest of the nations of this continent. We may say confidently that if tomorrow the United States were to be involved in a foreign conflict, the United States would not be alone for its Latin American sisters would, in my opinion, demonstrate that the territory of this continent cannot be attacked with impunity, and would manifest in no uncertain fashion *their* interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine,—"America, the continent, for the Americans of the continent." Nevertheless, it must ever be borne in mind that in order to foster the growing confidence of the Latin American republics, it is necessary that this great nation should take no backward step, but

should increasingly put in practice the theories and principles so ably advocated by its leading statesmen.

### *Commercial Relations*

The commercial relations between the United States and the countries of Latin America have been affected both favorably and unfavorably by the European war. The German trade, which was one of the main sources of supply for Latin America and one of the best markets for the products of those countries, has been practically paralyzed. The manufacturing and financial powers of England and France have been considerably decreased. In view of these circumstances, the opportunity has been presented to the United States to supply to Central and South America, at least, part of the products which these markets imported from Europe before the war. The result will be that the Latin American consumers will accustom themselves to the products of the United States, and will finally adopt them for their needs in the future. So also, the products of Latin America will be imported in greater quantities than heretofore by the United States and reciprocal trade relations established, that cannot help but result to mutual advantage. To this extent, therefore, it may be said that the commercial relations have been favorably affected. But they have also been unfavorably influenced,—first, due to the fact that this country does not possess a merchant marine, and, since the foreign vessels which at present ply between this country and other parts of the American continent are so scarce, the freight rates have materially increased. Moreover, the American manufacturer, accustomed to sell his goods on a cash basis, or at short terms, finds it difficult or impossible under the unfavorable conditions now existing to grant the liberal terms of credit which the Latin American merchants have formerly received from European countries. And finally, the absence of adequate banking connections between the United States and the Latin American republics has resulted in difficulties which the recent efforts of an important United States banking institution have thus far been able only slightly to ameliorate.

For the purpose of overcoming the unfavorable conditions existing today, numerous remedies have been and are yet being offered by authorities on the subject. Therefore, I shall only refer

to a question which, although very important, I have not heard discussed so far, and that is the influence exerted in the commercial relations by the acts of the government in its intercourse with the countries of Latin America.

In this regard it may be said that the commercial and manufacturing organizations of this country, which attend with such scrupulous care to all things that might affect their interests, have not endeavored to discover to what extent the policy of the government of this nation with relation to the Latin American countries influences the development of the commercial intercourse between the United States and those countries. In fact, they have not thought, apparently, that a lofty and far-seeing policy such as that of Secretary Blaine, that a policy of cordiality and coöperation such as that of Secretary Hay, and that a policy of mutual understanding and political harmony such as that of Secretary Root, are the solid foundations on which the commercial relations with those countries must be based to be successful. Contrariwise, it would appear that they have not considered that the policy of "Dollar Diplomacy" or an attitude so vague and shifting as not to be recognized, as a policy of any kind, can only result in distrust and resentment among the people of the southern countries, and create conditions which can only be prejudicial to the formation and development of trade relations.

Therefore, I venture to propose that the chambers of commerce and the manufacturing associations, wishing to develop their trade with the markets of Central and South America, appoint committees composed of men well versed in the laws, and thoroughly familiar with the customs, tastes, tendencies and ideals of those countries, so that they may study the problems which frequently arise in connection with the foreign policies of successive administrations in this country and direct attention towards anything which might in any way affect unfavorably the trade intercourse and development between this nation and its sisters to the South. All the endeavors of these committees will tend to aid the government, and when their activities are published in due course, the people of Latin America will realize that this nation, that the people of the United States as a whole, and specifically the group of manufacturers or merchants with whom they deal, are not responsible for any reprehensible policy of a particular administration, but that the

responsibility lies with some unfaithful public servant incapable of understanding his duties, or with a political group which misrepresents the sentiments of the people of this great nation.

### *Intellectual Relations*

In regard to the intellectual relations we may say that these are seemingly the ones which have been affected the least. There is noticeable, notwithstanding, a strong tendency toward the development of such relations. The merchants and manufacturers of this country are studying with genuine enthusiasm everything concerning Central and South America, and, on the other hand, the men of these countries are showing greater interest and a more thorough appreciation of all things relating to the United States. This condition of affairs will certainly result in a more rapid and positive development of intellectual intercourse, which is an indispensable factor if we would have more profitable and lasting commercial and political relationship.

It has been thus understood by some learned Americans, real leaders of thought, who have been laboring for many years with tenacity, conveying to Latin America the manifestations of the wonderful progress of this country in literature, art, etc., and bringing in turn from there to be spread in due course in this land all their observations concerning the intellectual and material advancement of the Latin American republics and the richness of their natural resources. Among the most distinguished leaders who have undertaken this worthy task is our own Dr. Rowe, whose name we are proud to mention as well as those of Professors Shepherd, Bingham and Moses, who, like Dr. Rowe, have largely been instrumental in the initiation of intellectual intercourse between this country and the Latin American states. Results not less important have been accomplished in this direction by the continuous efforts and the propaganda carried on at all times by the most popular of the directors of the Pan American Union, Mr. Barrett. All these gentlemen may well feel satisfied with their labors which have been suitably recognized by universities and governments in Latin America. They may be truly called American citizens in the sense of being citizens of the whole American continent.

Here I cannot refrain from calling attention to Harvard University for taking the first step in the right direction with a view to

closer intellectual intercourse with Latin America, by inviting the well known diplomat and writer, Senor Oliveira Lima, to give lectures concerning the history and literature of those countries. Let us hope that other universities here will follow the example set by Harvard and that there may be other public spirited men willing and able to continue the work so admirably commenced by Messrs. Rowe, Shepherd, Bingham and Moses.

Summarizing them, we may say that up to the present moment, the European war has resulted in a very considerable advantage to the United States in its relations with Central and South America and that undoubtedly such advantage will continue on an ever increasing scale providing this country shall properly direct its energies:

1. In actually practicing the broad minded theories and noble principles which have from time to time been expounded by the representatives of this government in their discussion of Latin American affairs;
2. In the creation of a merchant marine;
3. In procuring an adequate increase of banking facilities and arranging for more liberal credits in commercial transactions;
4. In sending competent representatives for the detailed study of the people of those countries and their resources; and
5. In arranging, wherever it may be practical, for the interchange of professors in the universities and the study of at least the Spanish language in these universities and schools.

If the course indicated should be followed during the next ten or fifteen years, in no part of the world will there be witnessed a greater commercial development and a more intimate political, and intellectual relationship than will exist between the United States and the republics of Central and South America.